

GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSE (ISC)

The Independent Study Course (ISC) is designed to provide opportunities for students to pursue interests and areas of study not addressed in existing courses. Students may elect to focus on any one of the pre-approved areas of study. Specific learning objectives will be defined by the student in consultation with a supervisor, who should be an NUS academic staff member. Modes of learning may include content-based/ didactic activities, practical work related to health program development or evaluation, or research in an area relevant to the chosen specialisation. The overall objective is to allow candidates to further tailor their learning experience according to their needs.

The following areas of study, and their corresponding codes, are offered:

SPH5890A	Epidemiology and Disease Control
SPH5890B	Quantitative Methods
SPH5890C	Environmental / Occupational Health
SPH5890D	Health Policy and Systems
SPH5890E	Health Services Research
SPH5890F	Health Promotion
SPH5890G	Global Health

APPLYING FOR AN ISC

Duration

It is envisaged that learning will take place via tutorials, discussions, practical work, fieldwork, preparation of reports or written assignments. The workload (including self-study and preparation) should justify the number of credits to be earned (4 units = 10 hours/week over one semester).

ISC proposal (mandatory) (Maximum 5,000 words)

The student must have a well-defined area of interest to pursue within the framework of the ISC and submit a detailed ISC proposal with the following sections:

- a) Details of the faculty member supervising the student;
- b) Overall learning objective(s) of the ISC [specify relevance to the core competencies of the MPH programme (ref Table 1) and the area of study identified under ISC]
- c) Specific area of study and/or project to be undertaken during ISC
 - i) ISC title
 - ii) Background summary of the issue/topics that are the focus of the course, including their importance within the context of public health
 - iii) ISC objectives – objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART), and should link to the learning objective(s)
 - iv) Description of the final product envisioned for the independent study

- v) If the independent study involves research, provide a description of the hypotheses to be evaluated and an overview of the methods.
- d) Detailed description of the work plan to achieve objectives identified in (b.)
 - i) specify frequency/duration of face-to-face contact with faculty;
 - ii) specify total effort in hours;
 - iii) include bibliography – annotated.

Final report (Maximum 5,000 words, excluding references)

This is to be based on mutual agreement between supervisor and student, depending on the nature and topic of study. Typically, ISC final products are similar in format to the final practicum report. Report submission date will be assigned when application is approved.

Modes of Learning

It is envisaged that learning will take place via discussions, practical work, fieldwork, preparation of reports or written assignments. The workload (including self-study and preparation) should justify the number of credits to be earned (4 units = 10 hours/week over one semester).

Assessment

The final report will be assessed by both the ISC Supervisor and the MPH Programme Director, with the grading weightage allocated as follows: 30% by the ISC Supervisor and 70% by the MPH Programme Director.

Table 1. Core competencies for the MPH programme

Plan, conduct and analyse epidemiologic studies to assess and monitor the health of communities and populations at risk, and to identify health problems and priorities
Review, appraise and disseminate health information in the practice of evidence-based health care
Investigate and control occurrences, including outbreaks, of infectious and non-communicable diseases, using relevant approaches and technologies
Identify and control factors in the natural and man-made environment (air, water, land, housing, workplaces) which affect health
Apply concepts and methods in social and behavioural sciences to formulate, implement and evaluate health promotion programmes
Analyse policies and strategies for effectiveness in the organisation and delivery of health care
Plan, organise and manage public health programmes and examine their use, cost, quality, accessibility, and outcomes
Advocate for public health programmes and resources; communicate effectively on relevant matters in professional and public settings
Work effectively in a public health team